

S.R. on 30th May, 1973 being recovered in Gharuan village, Ropar District, Punjab. The original correspondence is not traceable and it is not possible to determine what kind of ring was obtained.

A letter to Dr. W. Rydzewski, Editor of *The Ring*, Laboratory of Ornithology, Wrocław, Poland, was passed on to Dr. E. Gavrilov, Institute of Zoology, Alma-Ata, who confirms that rings with such fasteners have been used in Khazakhstan, and that eight recoveries from or near (1) Ghaziabad, (2) Sagar Lake,

Jodhpur, (3) Udaipur, (4) Gorakhpur, (5) Delhi, (6) Agra, (7) Dimna Lake, Jamshedpur, and (8) Sachors (?) Dist, Bihar, have been reported to the Ringing Centre at Moscow.

A paper on the migrations of *Ph. carbo* in Kazakhstan, has, I am told, been completed and will be published next year. Birdwatchers and sportsmen in India may well keep a lookout for additional specimens, in which through binoculars, the ring is very prominent in birds perched out of water.

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April 22, 1975.

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

7. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE EGGS OF THE GREAT WHITE-BELLIED HERON, *ARDEA INSIGNIS*

The Great Whitebellied Heron *Ardea insignis* Hume (ex Hodgson) is a little known species occurring in swamps, marshes and forests from Nepal through Sikkim, Bhutan and N.E. Assam to Bangladesh, Arakan and North Burma. Only four eggs appear ever to have been taken, all of these being in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History). They all came originally from the Stuart Baker Collection, but one egg was apparently given by Baker to J. Davidson and reached us with the latter's collection. The eggs are two and two, two from Sikkim and two from Arakan, the Sikkim eggs being markedly smaller than the others, and for this reason were not accepted as genuine by Baker; they do not appear in the manuscript catalogue of Baker's collection, and it was one of these two which Baker gave to Davidson. These two were addled eggs taken from two separate heron's nests each of which

also contained two chicks (Baker 1929), which fact might explain their small size. The Arakan eggs were two from a set of four and were on the point of hatching. One egg (the larger) is partially broken and filled up with wax. They were collected by a Mr W. S. Thom and given to J. C. Hopwood who passed them to Baker. It is not recorded what became of the other two eggs in the clutch. The measurements of the eggs are as follows:

Sikkim eggs: 63.0×42.9 and 63.1×41.65
Arakan eggs: 69.0×49.7 and 72.2×50.9
It would be unusual, but by no means impossible for the two pairs of eggs collected to have come from the extremes of the species' normal size range. To ascertain what range might be expected I compared the eggs of *A. insignis* with the normal range for *Ardea cinerea*, as given by Witherby *et al.* (1940). The range for *A. cinerea* is 53.5-66.7 and 40.0-49.7. It will

be seen therefore that the difference in size of the two lots of eggs of *A. insignis* is no greater than the normal range of *A. cinerea* and therefore the size difference is not, in itself, a valid reason for rejecting the Sikkim eggs.

No other large heron is known to breed in Sikkim. Sálím Ali (1962) lists only one pos-

sibility, *Ardea goliath*, which may occur as a vagrant, but is not recorded as breeding anywhere within the Indian sub-continent. Therefore, if the Sikkim eggs of Baker's are *not* the eggs of *Ardea insignis* they are the eggs of some other species of heron hitherto unrecorded from Sikkim.

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LONDON, S.W.7,
January 30, 1975.

MICHAEL WALTERS

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8. PEACOCKS AND COBRA

A common belief is that peacocks and snakes are mortal enemies. How far the peafowl is dangerous to large snakes may be a moot point but instances of sighting of snakes and peafowl engaged in mock fights are not uncommon.

One evening sitting behind a bush at the Forest Plantation of *Acacia arabica* near our College, I and some of my friends watched a flock of peafowl drinking water from a puddle on the fringe of the forest. Abruptly one peacock looked up at a nearby tree and started moving watchfully towards the tree. We soon saw a large cobra descending from the tree.

As soon as the cobra landed on the broken black soil two peacocks 'escorted' it on either

side.

The snake made its way passively but the peacocks occasionally pecked at the cobra gently and to this the reptile responded by raising its hood. The peacocks were wary, and whenever the cobra raised its hood they stood alert with raised hackles. As the cobra started gliding, the peacocks pecked at it and always the cobra reacted. The birds did not attempt to kill the snake, they just teased it.

This behaviour continued nearly for a hundred feet but nearing a thorny bush the snake vanished into a hole and the peacocks returned to their harems.

AYYANADAR JANAKI AMMAL COLLEGE,
SIVAKASI,
January 30, 1975.

A. J. T. JOHNSINGH